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SECRETEstimate of Communist China's Future Advanced
Weapons Capabilities

While a first test by Communist China of a nuclear device could occur at any time and there have been some recent reports suggesting the possibility of a test this fall, it is considered likely that a test will not occur before early 1964 and, assuming normal difficulties, that it might not occur until late 1964 or even 1965. Following detonation initial production is likely to be limited to one or two crude weapons per year. More substantial production would probably become possible only toward the end of the decade.

Initial delivery means might be provided by a force of 15 or so TU-4 (BULL) medium piston bombers (B-29 type) and possibly by two TU-16 (BADGER) medium jet bombers if they are still operational. The Chinese force of approximately 315 IL-28 (BEAGLE) jet light bombers would become useable as more sophisticated weapons are developed. It is considered likely that Peiping will prefer to concentrate upon the development of missiles - initially upon a medium range system. Even with a top priority program it is unlikely that missiles will be ready for deployment before 1967. A compatible nuclear warhead might be developed three to four years after an initial nuclear detonation, but if production of weapons is only one or two a year, this development would take longer. The ChiComs have not begun development of submarine systems or ICBMs.

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GROUP 1

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